

What Is Dharma?

Human beings are the highest-evolved beings. They possess clearly-reflected consciousness, and this makes them superior to animals. No other being has such a clear reflection of consciousness. Human beings can distinguish between good and bad with the help of their consciousness, and when in trouble they can find a way out, with its help. No one likes to live in misery and suffering, far less human beings, whose consciousness can find means of relief. Life without sorrow and suffering is a life of happiness and bliss, and that is what people desire. Everyone is in quest of happiness; in fact it is people's nature to seek happiness. Now let us see what one does to achieve it and whether it is achieved by those means.

In their search for happiness people are first attracted towards physical enjoyments. They amass wealth and try to achieve power and position to satisfy their desires for happiness. One who has a hundred rupees is not satisfied with it, one strives for a thousand rupees, but even possessing thousands of rupees does not satisfy. One wants a million, and so on. Then it is seen that a person having influence in a district wants to extend it over a province, provincial leaders want to become national leaders, and when they have achieved that there creeps in a desire for world leadership. Mere acquisition of wealth, power and position does not satisfy a person. The acquisition of something limited only creates the want for more, and the quest for happiness finds no end. The hunger for possessing is unending. It is limitless and infinite.

However dignified or lofty the achievement, it fails to set at rest people's unlimited quest for happiness. Those who hanker after wealth will not be satisfied until they can obtain unlimited wealth. Nor will the seeker of power, position and prestige be satisfied until he or she can get these in limitless proportions, as all these are objects of the world. The world itself is finite and cannot provide infinite objects. Naturally, therefore, the greatest worldly acquisition, even if it be the entire globe, would not secure anything of an infinite and permanent character. What then is that infinite, eternal thing which will provide everlasting happiness?

The Cosmic Entity alone is infinite and eternal. It alone is limitless. And the eternal longing of human beings for happiness can only be satiated by realization of the Infinite. The ephemeral nature of worldly possessions, power and position can only lead one to the conclusion that none of the things of the finite and limited world can set at rest the everlasting urge for happiness. Their acquisition merely gives rise to further longing. Only realization of the Infinite can do it. The Infinite can be only one, and that is the Cosmic Entity. Hence it is only the Cosmic Entity that can provide everlasting happiness – the quest for which is the characteristic of every human being. In reality, behind this human urge is hidden the desire, the longing, for attainment of the Cosmic Entity. It is the very nature of every living being. This alone is the dharma of every person.

The word dharma signifies “property”. The English word for it is “nature”, “characteristic” or “property”. The nature of fire is to burn or produce heat. It is the characteristic or property of fire and is also termed the nature of fire. Similarly, the dharma or nature of a human being is to seek the Cosmic Entity.

The degree of divinity in human beings is indicated by their clearly-reflected consciousness. Every human being, having evolved from animals, has, therefore, two aspects – the animal aspect, and the conscious aspect which distinguishes a person from animals. Animals display predominantly the animality, while human beings due to a well-reflected consciousness also possess rationality. The animality in human beings gives them a leaning towards animal life or physical enjoyment. They, under its influence, look to eating, drinking and gratification of other physical desires. They are attracted towards these and run after them under the influence of their animality but these do not provide happiness as their longing for it is infinite. Animals are satisfied with these limited enjoyments as their urge is not infinite. However large the quantity of things offered to an animal may be, it will take only those which it needs and will not bother for the rest. But humans will certainly act differently in these conditions. This only establishes that animals are satisfied with the limited, while the desire of human beings is limitless, although the desire for enjoyment in both is prompted and governed by the animal aspect of life. The difference in the two is due to the possession by the human being of a clearly-reflected consciousness, something which animals lack. The infinite nature of the human urge for absolute happiness is due to their consciousness alone. It is this consciousness alone which is not satisfied with the physical pleasure of possession, power and position – things which in spite of their huge proportions, are only transitory in character. It is their consciousness which creates in human beings the longing for the Cosmic Entity.

The objects of the world – the physical enjoyments – do not quench the thirst of the human heart for happiness. Yet we find that people are attracted by them. The animality in people draws them towards gratification of animal desires, but the rationality of their consciousness remains ungratified since all these are transitory and short-lived. They are not enough to set at rest the unending and unlimited hunger of the human consciousness. There is, thus, a constant duel in humans between their animality and rationality. The animal aspect pulls them towards instant earthly joys, while their consciousness, not being satisfied with these, draws them towards the Cosmic Entity – the Infinite. This results in the struggle between the animal aspect and consciousness. Had the carnal pleasures derived from power and position been infinite and endless, they would have set at rest the eternal quest of consciousness for happiness. But they do not, and that is why the fleeting glory of temporal joys can never secure a lasting peace in the human mind and lead people to ecstasy.

It is only the well-reflected consciousness which differentiates human beings from animals. Is it then not imperative for human beings to make use of their consciousness? If their consciousness lies dormant behind their animality, people are bound to behave like animals. They in fact become worse than animals as, even though endowed with well-reflected consciousness, they do not make use of it. Such people do not deserve the status of human beings. They are animals in human form.

The nature of consciousness is to seek for the Infinite or realize the Cosmic Entity. Only those who make use of their consciousness and follow its dictates deserve to be called human beings. Therefore, every person, by making full use of his or her reflected consciousness, earns the right to be called a human being and finds his or her dharma or nature to be only the search for the Infinite or Cosmic

Entity. This longing for the Infinite is the innate quality or dharma which characterizes the human status of people.

Happiness is derived by getting what one desires. If one does not get what one desires, one cannot be happy. One becomes sad and miserable. The clearly-reflected consciousness in people, which alone distinguishes them from animals, seeks the Cosmic Entity or the Infinite. And so people derive real happiness only when they can attain the Cosmic Entity or get into the process of attaining It. Consciousness does not want earthly joys because being finite none of them satisfy it. The conclusion we arrive at is that the dharma of humanity is to realize the Infinite or the Cosmic Entity. It is only by means of this dharma that people can enjoy eternal happiness and bliss.

The characteristic or dharma of human beings is to attain Brahma. It is, therefore, necessary to see whether Brahma exists or not, as it would be futile to attempt to get something which does not actually exist. If Brahma exists, we must know what It is.

Every action a person performs, appears to have been executed by his or her physical organs, the indriyas. These organs or indriyas are ten. And it appears that almost every action that a person performs appears to have been performed because of these ten indriyas. Yet this is not actually so. If the mind does not work behind them, the indriyas by themselves cannot perform any action. It is the mind which works and the ten indriyas are merely the instruments through which the work is executed. The action which originates in mind only finds its external manifestation with the help of the indriyas. To explain this we can take the example of a person looking at a book. It is only the mind which visualizes the book with the help of the eyes. If the mind does not work the eyes will not be able to see the book. For instance, a person in an unconscious state because of anaesthesia or some other reason will not be able to see the book even if his or her eyes are wide open. In such an unconscious state the eyes are not damaged, yet they cannot perform their natural function because the contact with the mind is suspended. This is why under the influence of anaesthesia, the organs or indriyas do not function, although they remain in perfect order. Often, when we are absorbed in thought, we fail to notice a person or recognize a friend standing right in front of us. This is only because, in spite of our eyes being in perfect order and wide open, the mind, which actually performs all actions, does not make use of the indriyas, the eyes. It is the mind which works and the indriyas only help in its external manifestation.

If it is the mind only which works, let us see how it acts through these indriyas. For instance, looking at a book is an action which the mind performs with the help of the eyes. When the mind sees a book, what actually happens is that the mind, with the help of the eyes, takes the shape of something we call a book. This shape which the mind takes is different from the image which is formed on the retina, as the mind can see and become like a book even when the eyes are closed; but the eyes cannot see when the mind does not function. So it is the mind which takes the form of a book during visual perception. This portion of the mind which takes the form of the book is termed citta or mind-stuff. But even if the citta takes the form of a book, there must be something other than the citta which does the work of seeing. The part of the mind which does the work of seeing is called ahaṁtattva or doer "I". But "I" will not be able to see anything unless "I" exists. So there must be another part of the mind which is different from

these two. This third part of the mind is the part which gives the feeling of “I” and is called mahattattva. Without the feeling of the existence of “I” or knowledge of the self, no action can be performed. This feeling of “I” or knowledge of the self comes from mahattattva or buddhitattva. The collective name for these three – citta, ahaṁtattva and mahattattva – is mind or antahkaraṇa or introversial psychic force. But these three portions of mind are only the outward manifestations of mind. It is with this mind that the action of seeing a book is performed, and this is termed psychic assimilation of rūpa tanmātra.

Tanmātra is a new term and should be explained. The microscopic fraction of a wave radiated from an object and received by the indriyas is called tanmātra or inference. To explain this further, it can be said that the idea of a book is grasped with the help of rūpa tanmātra (the ideatory vibration of the nerves creates an image or figure in the mind) when one looks at the book. But if the eyes are closed or if one is in a dark place, one can still recognize the book by touch. Here the idea of the book is assimilated due to another tanmātra, that is, the tanmātra of touch or tactual perception. Again if someone drops a book out of sight or out of reach, it is possible to identify it as a book through the auditory tanmātra. Citta comes in contact with the tanmātras only when ahaṁtattva wants it to. The act of looking at or identifying the book must be done by ahaṁtattva as citta by itself does not possess the capacity to perform any function. When ahaṁtattva or the part of the mind which works wants to see a book, citta comes in contact with the organs of sight, that is, the eyes. The eyes receive the rūpa tanmātra from the book. This tanmātra which is always present in the environment in the form of waves, strikes against citta through the eyes, which form a sort of door to bring citta in contact with the outside world. Citta then takes the shape of the book, and ahaṁtattva identifies or sees it as per the shape which citta has taken. Similarly, when ahaṁtattva wants to hear something it puts citta in contact with the organs of hearing, the ears. The ears receive the sound tanmātra, which is always present in the physical environment, through the medium of sound waves. Citta, on the impact of this tanmātra, becomes the sound itself, and ahaṁtattva hears that sound. This shows that citta takes the form of whatever ahaṁtattva desires or does. To put it another way, citta manifests the actions which ahaṁtattva performs.

It has already been explained that citta, ahaṁtattva and mahattattva or buddhitattva constitute the mind. Citta only has the capacity to take the form which ahaṁtattva wants. Similarly ahaṁtattva only has the capacity to perform actions. It can only work. There must be something to make it work. That something is mahattattva or buddhitattva, which gives one the feeling of “I”. This feeling of “I” is derived from the mind and this “I” in the mind makes ahaṁtattva and citta perform their respective functions. Without this “I” it is not possible to feel or see a book even if, under the influence of ahaṁtattva, citta takes the shape of the book. But then this “I” is only a part of the mind. That is, there is another “I” which is the possessing “I”, or the “I” which knows that there is a mind. The existence of “I” in the mind only proves that there is another real entity which is beyond mind and which knows the existence of mind. This “I” which is the witnessing entity and witnesses the existence of mind and the existence of buddhitattva or the feeling of “I”, is called ātman or unit consciousness. Thus through introspection and concentrated thinking one observes that ātman and mind, that is, unit consciousness and mind, are two separate entities.

Átman or unit consciousness and mind are two separate entities, yet they must be related to each other. In the first instance it appears that I am aware of my existence. Then the same “I” that appears to prove my existence makes me work, and a part of my mind called citta takes the form of the book through tanmátras to enable me to see the book. The “I” that gives me consciousness or the “I” which witnesses the existence of my mind and therein of the “I” which gives the feeling “I exist” is átman or unit consciousness. The “I” that gives the feeling of “I exist” and also proves the existence of átman or unit consciousness, is mahattattva. The “I” that works or sees the book is ahamtattva and the portion of mind that takes the shape of the book and enables ahamtattva to see it is citta. This shows that the same “I” has a different function at each stage. How these different functions of the same “I” come about needs further clarification. The statement “I exist” presupposes the presence of “I” which is the witness of this existence. This witnessing entity is átman or unit consciousness and its presence is established by the feeling of existence that one displays by one’s every action. That this assertion of “I exist” is different from átman or unit consciousness is seen from the fact that this “I” presupposes the presence of my átman or unit consciousness. This feeling proves that unit consciousness is only consciousness and that without consciousness existence is not possible. Without consciousness there can be no feeling of existence. What then is going to witness the existence of “I”? Consciousness is therefore essential to create the feeling of mahattattva or buddhitattva. To be explicit, mahattattva or buddhitattva cannot exist without átman or unit consciousness.

But the witnessing entity and the pure “I” feeling appear to be different functional forms of the same “I”. In fact the “I” that witnesses my existence, also manifests itself as the “I” of “I exist.” The witnessing “I” is unit consciousness or átman and it manifests itself as mahattattva or buddhitattva and thus establishes its own existence. It is the witnessing entity or unit consciousness which on taking up the function of the “I” of “I exist”, is called mahattattva or buddhitattva. Thus unit consciousness is not only consciousness, it also has a quality with the help of which it manifests itself through different functions. This quality is not consciousness, as otherwise it would not be necessary for unit consciousness to manifest itself as mahattattva and express itself as the “I” of “I exist”, which is different from the witnessing entity. Consciousness and its quality are therefore two separate entities in átman or unit consciousness. As this quality is different from consciousness, it must have been obtained from somewhere. There must be some other factor to qualify átman to make it manifest itself as mahattattva. That which gives this quality to átman is called Prakrti. In other words, it is due to Prakrti qualifying átman that it is manifested as mahattattva and gets the feeling of “I”.

Prakrti needs an explanation. Prakrti is the entity which controls natural phenomena. Prakrti is neither nature nor quality. For instance, the quality of burning is said to be the nature of fire. There must be something which gives this quality to fire; just as there is some entity which gives its quality to unit consciousness. That which qualifies unit consciousness is Prakrti and not the quality which is exhibited due to Her influence. Prakrti is a Sanskrit word and is derived pra – kr + ktin and it means to do something in a special way. Unit consciousness establishes its existence only by being qualified by Prakrti. In other words, Prakrti qualifies unit consciousness or átman to give it the feeling of its existence. Energy is required to perform any action. As Prakrti performs the action of qualifying átman or unit consciousness, She is a unique force. She is the principle which qualifies unit consciousness. It is Prakrti who, by Her influence on unit consciousness, gives it the qualities of different functions. Prakrti is a unique force – a principle. But some questions which arise are: whose principle is She, and where does She come from?

Prakṛti is the principle of Puruṣa, and it is by His own principle that Puruṣa is influenced and qualified. As Prakṛti is the principle of Puruṣa, She must exist within Puruṣa. In fact She always does. Unit consciousness and its prakṛti can never be separated from each other, just as the burning principle of fire which cannot be separated from fire. Anything which acquires a characteristic quality due to the influence of a principle or force, cannot exist if that principle or force is withdrawn from it. The two will always go together, and so do unit consciousness and its principle, prakṛti. Unit consciousness and its prakṛti are inseparable like the two sides of a sheet of paper. The only function of Prakṛti is to continually create different forms by Her influence over consciousness.

Unit consciousness is the witnessing entity and realizes its existence only when it is qualified to manifest as “I” of “I exist.” The principle of Prakṛti which establishes the existence of unit consciousness by qualifying Puruṣa is called sattvaguṇa, the sentient principle, and the part of mind which is thus formed to give the feeling of “I exist” is called mahattattva or buddhitattva. It will be more correct to say that under the influence of sattvaguṇa, unit consciousness manifests itself as mahattattva or buddhitattva.

Every action presupposes existence. Unless I exist, I shall not be able to see. Here also we find that “I” has two different functions or aspects. The first is the witnessing entity or consciousness, which, in order to prove or realize its existence, has acquired the feeling of “I exist,” and the same “I” now performs the function of seeing. The “I” of “I exist” is the buddhitattva which, while seeing something, takes up the function of seeing in addition to establishing the existence of unit consciousness. When unit consciousness is influenced by Prakṛti, it manifests itself as buddhitattva. Similarly, the additional ability to perform an action is also caused by the influence of Prakṛti on buddhitattva. Prakṛti will also be present in buddhitattva as it is only a manifestation of unit consciousness, and Prakṛti is bound to be with unit consciousness wherever and in whatever form it may exist. The principle or guṇa of Prakṛti which gives this quality or capacity to buddhitattva is called rajoguṇa, the mutative principle. Thus when buddhitattva is influenced by Prakṛti, it displays two functions or aspects. The latter, which it gets from rajoguṇa and which gives it the capacity or quality to perform an action, is known as ahaṁtattva. That is, buddhitattva manifests itself as ahaṁtattva when influenced by rajoguṇa or the mutative principle of Prakṛti.

Every action is bound to have a result in the end. For example, when you look at a book the result is seeing the book. How we see a book was explained earlier. Citta, which is a part of mind, picks up the form-producing tanmātra of the book and itself becomes the form of the book. It is that book that ahaṁtattva sees. Citta takes the form of what ahaṁtattva wants it to be. When ahaṁtattva sees a book, citta becomes that book, and when it hears a sound, citta becomes that sound. Citta therefore is entirely dependent on ahaṁtattva for its form. Citta keeps on changing its form at the bidding of ahaṁtattva. It must then be very closely connected with ahaṁtattva. How citta is formed needs clarification. Citta, as was explained earlier, is a part of the mind, and buddhitattva and ahaṁtattva are the other two parts. Buddhitattva and ahaṁtattva are manifestations of unit consciousness formed due to the influence of sattvaguṇa of Prakṛti over it and of rajoguṇa over buddhitattva. In other words it is unit consciousness which, under the influence of Prakṛti, takes up the function of ahaṁtattva in the second stage. Hence

Prakṛti is present in ahaṁtattva and is bound to qualify it further. In fact, it is due to Prakṛti qualifying ahaṁtattva that it manifests itself as citta. The quality of Prakṛti which influences ahaṁtattva is called tamoguṇa, the static principle. It is as a result of the influence of tamoguṇa that ahaṁtattva, or the “I” that performs actions, has to take up the mental image of the result of its action. This means that when “I” see a book, it is “I” that becomes like the book. Another “I” thus comes into being under the influence of tamoguṇa. It is this “I” which takes the form of the mental image of the book during perception. This “I” which becomes like the book or takes on the form of the book is citta. Thus it is unit consciousness which gradually manifests itself as citta.

In the preceding paragraphs it was established by logic and reasoning that it is only unit consciousness which, under the influence of the different principles of its Prakṛti, gradually manifests itself as citta, and as a result of this, mind comes into being. The existence of unit consciousness is essential for mind, which is only a gradual manifestation of unit consciousness under the qualifying influence of Prakṛti. Mind, in fact, cannot be formed without the presence of ātman or unit consciousness. But we know that mind is present in every individual. Hence ātman or unit consciousness is also present in every individual. There are innumerable individuals in this universe, and as ātman or unit consciousness is reflected in each one, there appear to be many ātmans or unit consciousnesses. The collective name for all these ātmans or unit consciousnesses is Paramātmā, Bhūmācāetanya, Brahma or Bhagavān. Just as twelve units make a dozen, twenty make a score, and the collective name for a very large number of soldiers is an army, the collective name for all the unit consciousnesses is Paramātmā, Bhūmācāetanya or Bhagavān. The name Bhagavān should not be construed as a mighty human figure with powerful hands and feet. It is the collection of all our ātmans. The nearest word in English which may be used for ātman or unit consciousness is “soul”, so Bhagavān may also be called Universal Consciousness or Universal Soul. This shows that Bhagavān does exist and that It exists as Paramātmā or Universal Soul, Bhūmācāetanya or Cosmic Consciousness, or Brahma, the Eternal Blessedness.